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ABSTRACT

A Massachusetts family literacy project, the Northampton Family Literacy Project, is described, in which adult English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) learners enrolled in a community educational center in order to learn English as their children enrolled in a child care program at the local library. Both groups were involved in language activities, the core of which were children's literature books read by both the children and adults. Among the activities were the following: choosing books collaboratively with the librarians; developing language activities and helping the adult ESL teachers; joint story times; reading aloud at home; and teaching reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary through children's literature. Books suitable for read-aloud activities are discussed. Additional discussion focuses on ways to fund a literacy project and to vary the NFLP approach to meet the needs of other communities. An annotated list of 37 children's books used in the Northampton project is appended. (LB) Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education

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Family Literacy for Family-Oriented People

by

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Family Literacy for Family-Oriented People

I'd like to discuss a family literacy project I was involved in a couple of years ago. From its inception to its official close about nine months later, it was the most exciting educational project I have participated in. Even though the particular project I worked with took place in Massachusetts, I believe it is relevant to many other areas, including the Western Pacific Region. Anywhere that educators would like to encourage reading--reading by children or adults--this sort of program would be helpful. Family literacy comes under a more general term, intergenerational literacy, which means literacy between different generations. The concept of intergenerational literacy could be extended to any literacy sharing between any older and younger people (cross-age literacy).

Literacy as used here means reading and writing--not just reading; however, much of my discussion will focus on reading. The philosophy behind encouraging literacy between different generations is that children will become readers and will more likely become better readers if reading is a part of their home culture or the everyday culture of their older familial models such as parents, aunts, grandparents, cousins, and all significant others.

The concept of intergenerational literacy could be extended to literacy modeled by older age learners for younger age learners. In Reading Miscue Inventory:

Alternative Procedures (1987), Yetta Goodman, Dorothy Watson, and Carolyn Burke discuss the knowledge readers bring to the text they read, part of that knowledge is gained from being a member of a community or social setting that includes other readers:

> Readers bring much to their reading: knowledge of their language or languages; ideas about written language; such as how it works and what it is used for; and concepts based on their background and experiences as individuals, and as members of a family and a community. Being a member of a community and possessing knowledge about the world and language reflecting the community form the basis of an individual's expectations and beliefs about reading and its importance. This social knowledge is well embedded in students and influences their attitudes about reading and learning to read.
>
> (p. 23)

Yet if books and reading are not part of the learner's (adult or child) home, there is not as strong a basis with which to form "expectations and beliefs about reading and its importance." The aim of intergenerational literacy is to help both adults and children read. When children see adults they know intimately read and their home has books as part of its milieu, they learn to see reading as a "natural" part of their social and family life. If adults read to children, then a bond gets established between the parent and child and reading has a great emotional impact on both. I believe the same would be true of shared literacy experiences between cross-age readers. The literacy experiences are not then simply intellectual exercises in order to accomplish school work. They become an integral part of everyday life.

The particular program I will describe briefly is the Northampton Family Literacy Project (NFLP). In the NFLP, adult ESL learners enrolled in a Massachusetts community educational center, Casa Latina, Inc., in order to learn English, their children enrolled in a child care program at the local library nearby. Both were involved in language activities, the core of which were children's literature books read by both the children and adults. Since the NFLP was intended as a small pilot project, there were technically only seven adult participants and eight children (ages two-and-a-half to five). However, by the close of the project, actual participants included at least twenty-nine adults and many more children that these adults knew and read to. Even though the other adults did not have pre-school aged children enrolled at the library, they had pre-school or elementary age children to read to--relatives or little friends.

Since I was the consultant to the adult component, I will focus on the adult literacy activities.. The first task was to collaboratively choose books with the librarians who were in charge of the children's project. (See "End Notes 1" for a list of the books used in the NFLP.) The books had to be suitable for both children and the adults. The second task was to develop language activities and offer aid in class implementation for the two teachers of the ESL adults, Andrea and Felicia. When one ESL teacher, Felicia, had to leave the program, I was given another task: teaching the

Intermediate Level ESL class. Andrea continued to teach Beginner ESL. It was then I had the good fortune to became both consultant and teacher-participant in the project. I taught the Intermediate Level ESL class and helped the Beginner ESL teacher develop activities for her students.

Most of the activities of the children and adults were separate, yet there were joint activities also. One joint activity was a Story Time at the library where adults joined the children at the library. This was a time for both to hear stories read by the librarians or volunteers and/or for the adults to share their student-created stories with the children. One literacy sharing involved the ESL adults enacting a a dramatic reading (Readers Theatre) of Gilberto and the Wind (1963) by Marie Hall Ets. Also, a big book written by the ESL adults that paraphrased The Paper Crane (1985) by Molly Bang was read-aloud by the story teller at the library after each ESL adult was introduced to the children. On another occasion, after again, first, introducing the student "authors," another student-created book of a script to a wordless book The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher (1980) by Molly Bang, was read aloud to the children.

As exciting and valuable as the sharing during Story Times at the library, the most valuable literacy sharing between generations took place when adults brought the paperback books home and read-aloud to the children they knew. The decision had been made early in the project to

give all the paperback books to every participant enrolled in Beginner and Intermediate ESL who wanted to read to children. Since they had worked for a couple of weeks or more on each book in class before bringing the books home, they were well-prepared for story telling to their children. By the time they brought their books home, they either were able to read the actual text of the book or paraphrase it for the children.

When using children's literature, many, many language activities can be developed for use with ESL adults. Many of these language activities could be adapted for use with younger ESL learners also. In the time available here, I can only hint at the language activities utilized with the many books used. (See "End Notes 1" for an annotated bibliography of the books used.) Certain books lent themselves well to certain activities; however, many of the activities could be utilized with any of the books used. Reading and writing, and grammar, and vocabulary were taught by using children's literature. Here are just a few of the language activities utilized:

Book handling
Listening while a story is read-aloud
Repeated Listening to a taped reading at home
Readers Theatre
Paraphrasing of a couple of pages or the entire book
Group writing of a "script" for a wordless book
Making small booklets based on the actual book
Vocabulary enhancement with "realia"
Grammar development using pictures of the book

Those of you who plan to develop your own intergenerational literacy project (or cross-age project)

may find other books more suitable to your particular population. Perhaps the children you are interested in are older. Then the children's books would be ones suitable for that age group. Since older people will also work with the books, then the books also need to be chosen with an eye to adult or older age interests and instructional readability levels.

For guidance about books suitable for read-aloud activities and how to approach reading aloud, browse through Jim Trelease's The New Read-Aloud Handbook (1989). Another very helpful book that will give you book titles and brief descriptions of many books is Literature and the Child (1989) edited by Bernice E. Cullinan. In addition, you may want to search for locally published materials. For Western Pacific populations where readability levels are appropriate, you may want to try working with The Big Wave (1986) by Pearl Buck (4th grade readability), So Far from the Bamboo Grove (1987) by Yoko Kawashima Watkins (6th grade readability), Isa's Avocado Tree (1988) by Evelyn Flores (6th grade readability), and/or Myths of Guam (1988) by Cat Major.

In choosing books for the NFLP, there were numerous considerations:

Age group of "generations"
Interests
Issues
Multiculturalism
Reflective of "good literature"
Type of illustrations
Practicality
Serendipidy

Some of these considerations will be outlined here. The NFLP children were very young--preschool age--so we had to locate books suitable for their age group. Our population was multicultural (Asians, Latinos, and some Europeans), so we attempted to include books representative of the students' cultures. We also included books that "represented" U.S. culture in some way: the concept of having baby sitters (Viorst, 1988), weather and climate (Clifton, 1973), Keats, and Loebel, 1976). Another important consideration was a desire to choose books that reflected "good literature" (Cullinan, 1989).

Because our adult ESL learners were mostly beginning literacy learners or functional nonreaders, the illustrations were important also. Mostly, illustrations that were realistic were used, since our beginning adult readers could more readily attach meaning to the realistic rather than more abstract or fanciful pictures. The other consideration about the illustrations was whether the picture and the text on the page had a match in meaning, so that the pictures would contribute to learning to read. Practicality and serendipidy were part of the process also. For example, nonfiction books were included for the adults only in order to introduce them to this genre (Cosner, 1984 and Lewis, 1971). One book was just serendipitously discovered during a Story Time at the library (Stranek, 1989).

There are various ways to fund a literacy project; however, some projects can be begun without additional funding. The NFLP was funded by the U.S. Department of Education as a one-year pilot project that included the library as a resource. In the NFLP, the librarians had an interest in intergenerational literacy as well as in encouraging the community-at-large to use the local libraries. Once a small-scale project is launched and successfully implemented, you may want to expand your program. Some programs would qualify for federal funding. For those interested in starting a project, one federal source of funding is Even Start, which is available for small or large scale projects. Small local businesses or large corporations may be a source of funding. One large corporation with funds earmarked for family literacy projects is Coors.

One local resource for humanities projects is the Guam Humanities Council, which accepts proposals for small and large scale projects ($5,000 or less or between $5,000 to $10,000, respectively). As long as the money is slated for books, the local Guam chapter of the International Reading Association awards grants up to $1,000 to teachers with approved projects.

Of course, you can begin a project without additional funds. Small scale projects may be started in libraries as a community service project. In Connecticut in the mainland U.S., Literacy Volunteers of America utilizes libraries as

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centers for literacy work. Teachers with "cross-age" literacy interests may want to cooperate with teachers from different grade levels for shared literacy experiences between their learners.

Earlier, I mentioned the possibility of variations to this project suitable to your needs. One specific possiblity is a project at the local village community center. Here, your aim would be to encourage literacy for the adult parents or grandparents of the community. If your community is very family-oriented, then, you might want to consider a family literacy project.

These adults will treasure reading to their young relatives, and the children will treasure this time as well. I have fond remembrances of reading with my three sons from infancy through high school. Sometimes all three would be snuggled close as we read. One adult prospective teacher lingered after a teacher preparation class to share her most treasured childhood memory. Each evening, her mother had read to her and her siblings while she was growing up. While she spoke, her eyes lit up with joy at this memory. Even though she had been read to many years before, she could remember it as vividly as if it were the present moment.

Parents or grandparents may be more motivated to learn to read if they know they can share and spend time with the children they love by sharing books. Perhaps, the home culture of most of your high school students already

encourages sharing between the older and younger children. Then, you may want to capitalize on this cultural need or character by having high school students share literacy experiences with children by having students visit classrooms and read to younger students, put on a Readers Theatre performance (a dramatic reading), or write a "script" for a wordless book and later read it to the younger children.

If you aren't ready for visitations between classes or schools, you can still arrange sharing between cooperating teachers and their students. Another possibility is that high school students could create their own stories and "books," paraphrase what they read, or write "scripts" of wordless books. Then they could just send the finished booklets they have created to cooperating teachers who will read them to their children or have their children read them themselves (or, at best, both). One simple beginning cross-age literacy project would be to assign as homework that an older student read to a younger student. Another variation is that a child would find an adult to read to. The variations and possibilities are limited only by the imagination of those interested in pursuing a literacy project--whether intergenerational, family, or cross-age.

I am currently working on a manuscript of book length which will discuss in detail the NFLP, the issues involved, the design of the program and the ESL language activities used with children's literature. If you would like more

information or would like to be notified of the availability of the completed manuscript, Using Children's Books to Encourage Literacy Sharing: Intergenerational Family Literacy Activities for Adult ESL Learners, you may write me at the following address:

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END NOTES

Annotated List of Children's Books Used
Northampton Family Literacy Project

Bang, Molly. The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher. N.Y.: Four Winds Press, 1980.
[Wordless Book. Various cultures represented in sidewalk scenes. "Rich" family living room scene at end. Pictures are a combination of slightly abstract and clearly realistic.

Bang, Molly. The Paper Crane. N.Y.: Greenwillow Books, 1985. [paperback]
[Asian main characters. Restaurant scene with multicultural group. Magical tale of a mysterious stranger and a paper crane. A change in fortune for a restaurant owner.]

Barrett, Judy. Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs. (Illustr.: Ron Barrett). N.Y.: Atheneneum, 1978.
[Humorous. Land of Chewandswallow. Rains food. Variety of foods. Winter scene at end.]

Bridwell, Norman. Clifford's Family. Scholastic Inc., 1984, 1987 (3rd printing).
[Big Book version. approx. 1 1/2' X 2']
Cassette available. Smaller books available. Teacher's Guide. Also available in Spanish. Check catalogue for other relevant titles.
[Cartoon pictures but wide variety of scenes as Emily and Clifford travel visiting the extended family--city, park, country, back yard, fire station, etc.]

Clifton, Lucille. The Boy Who Didn't Believe in Spring. (Illustr.: Brinton Turkle). E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1973.
[Afro-American and Italian main characters. For increasing awareness of variations of English dialects. King Shabazz and Tony Polito look for spring in New York city. Captures universal feeling of disbelief that spring will really come. Lots of street city scenes and objects. They find some yellow flowers in the vacant lot and see birds and discover a bird's nest with eggs in it.]

Clifton, Lucille. Everett Anderson's Goodbye. (Illustr.: Ann Grifalconi) Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983. [paperback]
[In child's terms deals with issue of death of close person. Needs time for discussion with young children. Useful for abstract issues and

concepts for adults. Goes through five stages of grief through child's reaction to father's death. Acceptance through awareness that love never dies.]

Cosner, Sharon. "Paper" Through the Ages. (Illustr.: Priscilla Kiedrowski). Minneapolis, Minnesota: Carolrhoda Books, 1984.
[Egyptian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Mayan Indian cultures. History of paper. Nonfiction easy-to-read style for beginning readers. Last chapter relates Asian and Mayan experiences with paper.]

Ets, Marie Hall. Gilberto and the Wind. New York: Puffin Books, 1978., c. 1963. [paperback]
[A young Latino boy experiences the wind. Relevant o any culture close to nature. Useful for "realia" to enhance vocabulary learning]

Friedman, Ina. How My Parents Learned to Eat. (Illustrated by Allen Say) Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984. [paperback]
[Japanese and U.S. cultures. Chopsticks and knife, fork and spoon.]

Keats, Ezra Jack. The Snowy Day. New York: Viking, 1962.
[For northern climates or for increasing awareness of other climates. A young boy experiences the snow.]

Lewis, Thomas P. Hill of Fire. (Illustr.: Joan Sandin. Harper & Row, 1971.
[Mexican History. "I Can Read History Book" 1943 eruption of Paricutin volcano. Farmer plowing with bull. Poke into hole in earth. Second recorded witness by human eyes of actual birth of volcano.]

Loebel, Arnold. Frog and Toad All Year. Harper & Row Publishers, 1976. [paperback]
Cassette Tape from Scholastic with turn the page signals.
[The adventures of two friends, Frog and Toad, through the four seasons. Winter, spring, and fall have useful pictures and activities for ESL learners. Even though the summer chapter shows ice cream and some summer scenes, it doesn't capture the essence of summer to me. Animal pictures could be problematic for some ESL adults, but the seasonal theme works for an area with those seasons. Also, friendship issue is important here. Besides that, Frog and Toad are just famous children's literature characters.]

Loh, Morag. Tucking Mommy In.
[U.S. culture. Single parent, a mother spends time with her children after school and work. While she is waiting for them to get ready to go to sleep, she falls asleep before they do, so they tuck her in to bed.]

Seeger, Pete. Abiyoyo. (Illustr.: Michael Hays) MacMillian Publishing Company, 1986.
[Would be nice to find this song on record from '60s and have students sing-a-long. Father and son ostracized from town because they are too "different" until they save the town from the monster, Abiyoyo.]

Slobodkina, Esphyr. Caps for Sale. (Illustr.: Slobodkina). Scholastic Book Services, 1968. [paperback]
[Humorous. Repetitive lines, predictable text. One favorite with children of many lands. This book was first published in 1940.]

Stranek, Muriel. I Speak English for My Mom. (Illustr.: Judith Friedman). Niles, Illinois: Albert Whitman & Company, 1989
[Lupe, a young Mexican-American girl, translates from Spanish to English for her mother when they go to the bank, doctor's, store, and in other places and instances. In order to get a better job, the mother, with her daughter's encouragement, decides to go to night school to study English. Relevant to most ESL learners who know the need for another to help them with the essentials.]

Viorst, Judith. The Good-Bye Book. (Illustr.: Kay Chorao). N.Y.: Atheneum, 1988.
[U.S. culture. Child doesn't want baby sitter but ends up happy with situation. Clear scenes related to story line. Acts sick, is angry, imagines scenes with baby sitter, mentions McDonald's Restaurant. Also shows child requesting a book and baby sitter reading to child.]

END NOTES 2

Possibilities for Other Projects

Berenstain, Stan and Jan. Inside Outside Upside Down. N.Y. Random House, 1968. [Humorous. Cartoon characters. Prepositions.]

Caines, Jeanette. Daddy. (Illustr: Ronald Himler). Harper& Row Publishers, 1977.
[Afro-Am. A girl visits her father on weekends. Closeness of father and daughter. Clear illustrations]

Henriod, Lorraine. Grandma's Wheelchair. (Illustr.: Christa Chevalier). Toronto, Canada: General Publishing, Limited, 1982.
[Physically handicapped. Four-year-old spends mornings helping his grandmother who is in a wheelchair. Cartoon pictures are clear and realistic enough for ESL learners. Domestic activities.]

Keats, Ezra Jack. Peter's Chair. Harper & Row, Publishers, 1967.
[New baby. "Sibling rivalry." Peek-a-boo image]

Loebel, Arnold. Ming Lo Moves the Mountain. Scholastic, 1982.
[Cassette Tape from Scholastic.[Asian. Humorous. Couple want to "move the mountain." Get advice from wise man and discover how to solve a "mountainous" problem. Pictures not as realistic as preferred but concept makes up for that.]

Louie, Ai-Ling. Yeh-Sen: A Cindarella Story from China. 1982.
[Asian folk tale. If you don't have an aversion to a Cindarella story and the "sexist" implications, it's a good alternative. Oldest European Cindarella is from 1634. From T'ang dynasty (618-907 A.D.) This version from Ch'ing dynasty (1644-1912)]

Martel Cruz, Adan. Yagua Days. Illustrated by Jerry pinkney. New York: Dial, 1987.
[Puerto Rican. Celebration of the rain and activities in the rain..]

Mayer, Mercer. There's a Nightmare in my Closet. New York: Dial, 1968.

Stolz, Mary. Storm in the Night. (Illustr: Pat Cummings)Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988.
[Afro-Am. characters. Oral tradition represented here also. Thomas hears a story from his

grandfather about thunderstorm. issue fear of a storm. Too much text for 2 1/2-5 yr. ages.]

Strand, Mark. The Night Book. (Illustr: William Pene DuBois). Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1985.
[Not the best for ESL, but deals with fear of the night. Story line too "unrealistic" for ESL, I think. The issue is useful though.]

Stranek, Muriel. I Speak English for My Mom. (Illustr.: Judith Friedman). Niles, Illinois: Albert Whitman & Company, 1989

Udry, Janice May. Let's Be Enemies. Harper & Row, 1961.
[Two friends who have a day feeling like "enemies" Remembrances of what they do as friends. Not for ESL project. Useful for issue of getting along and sharing and what it means to be a good friend.]]

Viorst, Judith. The Tenth Good Thing About Barney. (Illustr: Erik Blegvad) Alladin Books Macmillan Publishing Company, 1971.
[Gives a "grounded" view of death through experience of child who lost cat, Barney. Helping to grow flowers.]

Woerkom, Dorothy O. Abu Ali: Three Tales of the Middle East. (Illustr.: Harold Berson) Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1976
[Useful if Middle eastern ESL students in class. Humorous. Repetitive text, predictable.]

Yashima, Taro. Crow Boy. Viking Press, 1983.
[Asian. Japan. School experience of country boy who is not one of the crowd at school. On graduation day, he is accepted for his knowledge of crows and his ability to simulate their calls. The difference a teacher can make.]

Yolen, Jane. Milkweed Days. (Illustr.: Gabriel Amadeus Cooney). Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1976.
[U.S. New England scenes. Black and White photographs of rural western Mass. and children in the forest and fields. Lots of vivid summer scenes. Could be supplemented with colorful pictures of some of the things within such as clover, bluets, milkweed, barn. Could save milkweed for realia in ESL class.]

The Everything in the Whole Wide World Museum.
[Sesame street characters. Lots of vocabulary.]

Gogo's Car breaks Down.

[Humorous. Clown character. Some useful auto vocabulary. I have used this with an adult ESL learner interested in getting his license and driving.]

Sing a Happy Song.

[Middle Eastern setting. I have used this with adult ESL learners.]

Really Rosey.

[Available in Big Book series with cassette. Also, smaller books available.]

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Clifton, Lucille. The Boy Who Didn't Believe in Spring. (Illustr.: Brinton Turkle). E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1973.

Cosner, Sharon. "Paper" Through the Ages. (Illustr.: Priscilla Kiedrowski). Minneapolis, Minnesota: Carolrhoda Books, 1984.

Cullinan, Bernice. Literature and the Child. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1989.

Ets, Marie Hall. Gilberto and the Wind. New York: Puffin Books, 1978., c. 1963. [paperback]

Flores, Evelyn. Isa's Avocado Tree. (Illustrated by Vivian lujan Bryan). Guam: Green Island Publishers, 1988.

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Lewis, Thomas P. Hill of Fire. (Illustr.: Joan Sandin. Harper & Row, 1971.

Major, Cat. Myths of Guam. Printed in Sacrramento, CA, 1988, first printing, 1987.

Trelease, Jim. The New Read-Aloud Handbook. New York: Viking Penguin, a Division of Penguin Books USA Inc., 1989 (2nd ed.) C. 1982 C. Trelease, 1979.

Viorst, Judith. The Good-Bye Book. (Illustr.: Kay Chorao). N.Y.: Atheneum, 1988.

Watkins, Yoko Kawashima. So Far from the Bamboo Grove. New York: Puffin Books, A Division of Penguin Books, 1987. C. 1986.